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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PM TELLS CODEL MCCAIN BETTER WEAPONS AND QUICKER
TRANSFER NEEDED, NOT MORE TROOPS

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki told CODEL McCain December 13 that Iraq did not need more U.S. troops, but rather access to better weapons for Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to win against militias and insurgents. He agreed with the CODEL that Iraq needed to "work quickly" to demonstrate improvements in the security situation, using the opportunity to convey his desire for the acceleration of transfer of control and acceleration of building and equipping ISF. "Speed up the process of giving us weapons and giving us control, and we will pay the blood price". However, when pointedly asked by Senator Graham whether the Prime Minister would object if the US sent 20,000 more troops, the PM replied that he would not if the joint committee working on Baghdad security recommended to take that action. PM Maliki tempered CODEL comments on poor security by drawing attention to the positive achievements in Iraq over the past three years. He expressed optimism in the new Baghdad security plan, in political efforts to reach out to neighboring countries on security, and on ISF efforts to address the militia issue. End Summary.

WE PREFER CONTROL OVER INCREASE OF TROOPS

¶2. (S) When asked whether he would appreciate an increase in U.S. troop levels in Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki responded by requesting that the number of troops be kept at the current level, and not be increased. While he agreed that more troops were needed in Baghdad, he argued that they should be Iraqi troops, brought in from other areas in Iraq to Baghdad. He repeated that an increase in U.S. troops would not be as beneficial as better and more weaponry for ISF. However, when pressed specifically by Senator Graham if the Prime Minister would object an increase of 20,000 US troops, the Prime Minister said that he would not if such a recommendation came from the USG/GOI security committee working on Baghdad security.

¶3. (S) When the CODEL raised the importance of demonstrating to the American people security improvements in the upcoming months, PM Maliki agreed and urged that accelerated efforts be made to hand over control as well as to build up ISF. He emphasized that deadlines should be established, reaffirming the CODEL's own observations that results be demonstrated sooner rather than later. The PM said, "Let's identify deadlines and speed up building and equipping. Let's work quickly to achieve the best results."

PM RESPONDS TO CODEL COMMENTS ON SECURITY

¶3. (S) PM Maliki tempered CODEL comments on poor security by

highlighting the positive achievements in Iraq over the past three years -- he pointed to a freely elected unity government, reconstruction projects and important legislation. The PM refuted criticisms of the decision to dismantle USG/GOI Sadr City checkpoints, saying the decision to shut down those checkpoints had been a joint USG/GOI decision. He responded to Senator McCain's comments on U.S. disappointment with the security situation by linking the poor security situation with the former regime and with mistakes made in the past. Reiterating his positive outlook for the future, the PM said, "We have succeeded in achieving many of our milestones - we have made positive steps towards reform of De-Ba'athification and elections. What remains is defeating terrorism".

14. (S) Prime Minister Maliki noted that he was optimistic that improvements in the security situation would indeed be achieved in the upcoming months with the new Baghdad security plan. He explained that the previous efforts had allowed them to learn and select the pros and cons of certain strategies to create a new security plan. He asserted that that if the new plan received the right attention, it would decrease violence in Baghdad.

MILITIAS, TERRORISM, AND NEIGHBOR COUNTRIES

15. (S) The Prime Minister told the CODEL that that the government had made great progress in addressing militia activity. "We have given orders to our security forces to confront any insurgents or militias now that we have exhausted diplomatic options." Despite this, he acknowledged, militias in some parts of Iraq were stronger

BAGHDAD 00004564 002 OF 002

than the ISF (in some cases even part of the ISF). He noted that ISF had been outgunned in various confrontations, thus emphasizing the need for state of the art weapons. He assured the CODEL that he would not retreat on the position that militias should be disbanded, and had been proactive in confronting militias particularly in Samawah, Karbala, and Diwaniyah.

16. (S) When discussing Iraq's neighbors, the PM expressed hope that these countries would support Iraq in preventing the flow of terrorism. He added that these countries now were seeing that the dangerous situation in Iraq would affect their own countries. He reaffirmed the need to address the support that militia and terrorist groups, as well as Iraqi politicians, were receiving from outside Iraq. He highlighted as positive steps (a) the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Syria to prevent infiltration of terrorists across borders, (b) the reconciliation delegations that would begin their tours to neighbor countries in the upcoming weeks, and (c) an upcoming regional conference.
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